WIGTON

RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF

Dr. W. P. BRIGGS,

Medical Officer of Health.

JANUARY, 1896.

Printed by order of the Council,

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RURAL SANITARY DISTRICT.

Annual Report, 1895.

GENTLEMEN,—

Once more it is my duty to bring my Annual Report before your notice, and I shall endeavour therein to give you as terse a synopsis as possible of the chief events of the year that is past, connected with my duties as your Medical Officer.

Like its predecessor, it may be designated as a year of epidemics, scarlet fever engaging our attention, in the fullest sense, during the first six months, and measles during the last. Few villages under our supervision escaped the latter disease, though, fortunately, very few deaths have resulted if we take into consideration the very large number of children attacked. In January, scarlet fever appeared at Aikton and Gamelsby, and quickly spread to Kirkbampton, where the largest number of cases occurred. One of the earliest houses attacked was that used as the post office, which I considered necessary should be for some time discontinued for use in that capacity. I also thought it desirable that the father of the children attacked—the rural postman—should be superseded till all fear of conveying infection had ceased. This action was approved of at the General Post Office, though it provoked a good deal of local comment. In February the disease

reached Whitrigg and Angerton, and by March had extended to the village of Little Bampton. Watch Hill, Fletchertown, Easton, and Ireby were attacked in May, and in the latter village a number of cases occurred, and, as in Kirkbampton, the post office was attacked, and had to be closed. The schools were closed when thought desirable, and disinfectants were liberally supplied. Hardly had Ireby recovered from the outbreak of scarlet fever before measles appeared, and quickly spread to Fletchertown, and very speedily became general, as was the case in all neighbouring districts.

In addition to scarlet fever and measles, we have had very little zymotic disease, except a few cases of erysipelas and two of typhoid fever. These latter occurred in isolated houses, amid healthy surroundings, and their origin still remains shrouded in mystery. When we compare the year just past, in the direction of infectious disease, with the two that preceded it, we have room for some little amount of congratulation. In May, 1893, your Council adopted the Compulsory Notification Act, and from that time to the end of the year 119 notifications were received. During 1894, 111 reached me, whereas during the past year 80 have been sent out. This is a considerable diminution, and I think we may very fairly and justly attribute it to your action in adopting these compulsory powers. The duty of notification is *not* limited to the medical man in attendance. The head of the family, and, failing him, the nearest relatives of the patient, or those in attendance upon him, are under penalty of a substantial fine if, as soon as they are aware that they have under their care an infectious case, they do not at once report this to the Medical Officer of Health of the District. No amount of reiteration or advertisements and notices seems to be able to make the householder remember that he is—fortunately not very often, but now and then—under an obligation to carry this out. The fact that I have not received half-a-dozen notifications during the whole year from heads of families speaks for itself; and I am convinced that in many instances information of scarlet fever was not forthcoming from selfish reasons, with the result that the disease spread. This was notably so in the outbreak at Drumburgh and Port Carlisle. I further believe that at seaside places, where in the summer

months visitors congregate, there is a good deal of this suppression of notification; indeed, more than this, I believe some parents, through fear of the Notification Act, dispense with the services of the medical man altogether. Many successful prosecutions have been instituted for default of this kind. Many plead ignorance of the law, and the nature of the disease, as an excuse; but in future, where carelessness or attempt at concealment are discovered, and no medical practitioner has been called in, I shall insist on that section of the Act being enforced which legalises prosecution and fine. The object of notification is to arm the Medical Officer with *early* information, in order that he may use the more effectually the powers which the Public Health Act and other Acts give him. But he is, in the absence of compulsory isolation and disinfection, practically powerless, if the occupiers of infected houses do not co-operate with him, but try to frustrate his efforts, and look upon his visits as an intrusion. The notifications received during the year comprise 63 cases of scarlet fever, 1 of diphtheria, 13 of erysipelas, 2 of typhoid fever, and one of puerperal fever.

Vital Statistics.—Speaking generally, the statistics for the year do not read so well as in the previous one, and if reference be made to the tables which accompany my report it will be seen that we have, all round, considerably higher rates of mortality. This applies to each of the sub-districts, but notably to Wigton, where we have an increase of 44 deaths on the preceding year. In the Caldbeck sub-district we have an increase of 18 deaths, and in the Aspatria sub-district an increase of 22. This increased death-rate is not due to epidemics of any kind, for our fatalities from this form of disease are as satisfactory as in previous years. As far as I can make out it appears to be due to a weeding out of the aged, for in all three divisions of the district a large number have succumbed over 70 years of age. In the Wigton Division I find that 33 deaths have occurred in people over 75, and 18 of these had reached between 80 and 90 years. Our highest rate of mortality was reached in the month of May, when the Wigton District alone was responsible for 13 deaths.

Coming to details, I find that in the whole district during the year 235 deaths occurred, as compared with 161 in the previous one. This at first sight looks ominous; but we must not forget that the rates of mortality of 1894 were exceedingly low—lower than they had ever been before; and if reference be made to Table 3 it will be seen that only on two occasions in eight years have a smaller number of deaths taken place, viz., in 1889 and 1893. These 235 deaths represent a rate of mortality for the year 1895 of 17·8, that of 1894 being 12·2.

In the Wigton District 93 deaths occurred, equal to an annual rate of mortality of 18·1; in Aspatria District, 72, equal to 18·7; and in Caldbeck District, 70, equal to 16·7 per thousand.

The deaths under one year of age number 35, which, strangely enough, is identical with those of 1894, though a little differently apportioned: these are equal to an infant rate of mortality of 104 to every thousand births, which is very satisfactory. The infant rate of mortality in the three divisions is as follows:—Aspatria, 126 to every thousand births; Caldbeck, 108; Wigton, 80.

From zymotic disease there have been 8 deaths, viz., five from measles, two from scarlet fever, and one from typhoid fever. These are equal to a zymotic rate of mortality of 0·6 per thousand, which is an exceedingly low one.

If reference be made to Table A, which classifies the deaths during the year according to diseases, ages, and localities, it will be seen that 35 deaths occurred under 1 year, 20 between 1 and 5, 13 between 5 and 15, 11 between 15 and 25, 73 between 25 and 65, and 83 in people over 65 years of age- Scarlet fever was the cause of 2 deaths, measles of 5, typhoid fever of 1, puerperal fever of 1, phthisis or consumpton of 17, inflammatory diseases of the respiratory organs of 37; 32 people died from heart disease, 14 from injuries, and 124 from various other diseases. If a comparison is made with Table A of the present year and that of the previous one, it will be seen that up to the age of 25 years our deaths have increased by 14; between 25 and 65 their number is increased by 28, and over 65 years by 31.

This bears out my previous remark that we owe our increased rate of mortality, in the main, to the large number of fatalities among old people.

Births.—The number of births registered during the year is 14 fewer than in 1894, and in the whole district reached 337—180 males and 157 females. These are equal to an annual birth-rate of 25·6, as compared with 26·7 in 1894. In the Aspatria District 111 births were registered—60 males and 51 females—equal to an annual rate of 28·9. In the Wigton District 125 births were recorded—72 males and 53 females—equal to an annual birth-rate of 24·3 per thousand. In the Caldbeck District the number of births reached 101—48 males and 53 females—equal to an annual rate of 24·1 per thousand. Caldbeck is the only district in which the females outnumber the males.

Sanitation.—Having disposed of the vital statistics of the year, I come now to speak of the different sanitary defects brought before your notice, as far as a report of this kind will allow. Many minor details must of necessity be omitted.

In January, I reported certain cottages at Allonby without privy accommodation, also one at Blennerhasset. The former were ill-built, insanitary structures, and the owners not complying with your requirements, they were closed as unfit for habitation. I may here state that during the whole year I have not had a single notification of infectious disease from Allonby, which speaks well for the seaside sanitation of the north.

In February, I reported a cottage at Aikton, in which were six cases of scarlet fever, as having no privy or spouting, defective roof and drainage. These defects were attended to, after notice from your Authority.

March found us occupied with the drainage and water supply of Easton, where a very marked improvement was effected by the work done to the beck which traverses the village and received the drainage from the different farmyards. The water supply was considered

satisfactory, with one exception—a farm where the well was found polluted, and which remains in *statu quo*. Another supply should be provided here.

Leaving the sea-side, our attention was engaged in April with defective drainage and insanitary ashpit at Hesket-New-Market, and defective drainage at Caldbeck.

In May, many complaints reached us with respect to scantiness of water, more especially from Fletchertown and Bolton-Low-Houses, and Brough Hill. No. 2 well at Fletchertown was found polluted by a leakage of dark, offensive drain liquid, and was condemned as unfit for domestic purposes. In order to husband the resources of No. 1 well, a third was opened out and used for washing up purposes. Since then your Council has been making an endeavour to provide this village with water from a distance, and the engineer who examined the proposed sources reported favourably thereon. The three samples of water examined by me, from Well Head, Well Rash, and Green Foot, were all found sufficiently pure, and the Well Rash source was selected as offering the fewest difficulties and obstacles. The matter has, however, probably been delayed through the temporary closing of the colliery.

At this time a new system of drainage was completed at Bolton-Low-Houses, the well overhauled, and a new pump put in. In the previous year nine cases of typhoid fever occurred here, and were attributed to the drainage defects existing. The well at Brough Hill was also examined, and the water analysed and found pure. Suggestions were also made for protecting it from surface pollution. During this month the beck at Allonby, which had become offensive, was cleaned out, and endeavours made to put a stop to the nuisance which has so long existed, viz., the emptying of chamber utensils containing excreta into this stream. Coincident with these improvements was that effected at Yearngill to the water supply there. A valuable spring—the water from which was found very pure—was polluted by a surface drain in close proximity. This was done away with, the well protected, and a pump erected. The drainage of the neighbouring village of

Westnewton was at this time brought before your notice in my monthly report, and as no improvements were effected I again called attention to it in my September report, and I am hopeful that, as the Parish Council are anxious for an amelioration of the present state of things, some radical change will be brought about during this year.

In June, some long-needed drainage improvements were brought about at the village of Blencogo, and a cottage was condemned as unfit for habitation, owing to the back wall forming part of a piggery, the floor of which was considerably higher than that of the dwelling. Through this wall the sewage from the piggery percolated, and how the inmates tolerated this condition of things was more than my nasal organ could understand. The drainage of the farms at the south-west end of this village must engage our attention during the present year, as nothing but the veriest tinkering is attempted on the part of the owners, though I have frequently directed their attention to the dangers to health resulting from their farmyard liquid entering the road drains and stagnating there. A similar nuisance was at this time reported as existing at the west end of Torpenhow, and some improvement was effected by cleaning and opening out the drain, but the same baneful condition of things will reappear as long as the drainage from the manure heaps is allowed to collect in the street channel.

In July, communications were received from the Parish Councils of Uldale, Hesket-New-Market, and Caldbeck with respect to their water supplies. The Uldale water, which is a constant and most copious supply, was some years ago brought to the village in clay pipes, by gravitation, and no water-borne diseases have occurred in the village during the last twenty years. The water was said to be muddy and unfit for use. On inspection, I found this due to surface pollution after heavy rains, from a trough in close proximity to the tank. Metal pipes in substitution for the clay ones, and the building of a small reservoir, were recommended and approved of. The water, when subjected to analysis, was found quite pure.

The Hesket-New-Market water supply was examined throughout its course, and found contaminated at several points very badly. It is

a valuable water, unlimited in quantity, and only requires protecting from surface influences on its way to the village. Nothing has yet been done to secure this.

At Caldbeck, about thirty houses, with a population of 100, were found with practically no water supply, except such as one private well afforded. Two proposed sources were examined by me, and the one named "Flat Spout" selected on account of its purity and nearness to the village. The Parish Council, however, have not displayed the same alacrity to secure this as they did in urging their complaint to your Council.

In August and September the drainage at the village of Glasson was overhauled, and considerable improvements effected. I am pleased to be able to relate that during the year we have had fewer complaints than usual here. The amount of sickness also has been small, only one notification having been received.

In October, an insanitary dwelling at Thursby, to which our attention had been called by the Parish Council, was examined, and condemned, failing the provision of better ventilation and privy accommodation. In the following month, defects of drainage were reported by me as obtaining in one of the farmyards in this village, together with other dangerous and unwholesome conditions. These, I am happy to state, have either been or are being remedied. In one village of the Union—Little Bampton—I am able to report that very excellent and substantial work has been done in the way of a large contribution to a good system of drainage, which has long been needed. I trust that the work done here and the better state of things resulting therefrom will stimulate other villages in our district to act in a similar manner.

This concludes my synopsis of the chief work of the year, and beyond it little has been done. I myself have made a number of examinations of suspected water and water selected for public supplies, and have visited 89 cases of infectious disease in different parts of the

Union, on receiving notification of the same, pointing out, from time to time, such defects as existed in the various localities visited.

In bringing my report to a close, I would express the opinion that, though we are slowly, by our efforts, raising the standard of sanitary habits, and imbuing those who dwell in the country with the idea that cleanliness and ventilation are of some importance, still there are in many villages—especially in the dwellings of the working classes—an enormous number of unwholesome conditions to be remedied. The Parish Councils can help us much in our efforts at bringing about a position of greater safety, by forming sanitary committees and making house-to-house inspections, and reporting the results to your nuisance inspector. Such committees would have greater weight with the villagers than your officials, in educating them as to the importance of personal cleanliness, the baneful effects of overcrowding, the evils likely to accrue from want of ventilation and improper storage of food, the protection of their water supplies and the use of filters, and last, but not least, the disposal of slop water, and the way to keep their cows and pigs so as not to cause nuisances.

I remain, gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

W. PERRY BRIGGS.

TABLE 1.

REGISTRATION RETURNS FOR THE YEAR 1895.

Districts.	Population in 1895.	Births in 1895.	Deaths in 1895.	Death Rate per 1000.	Birth Rate per 1000.	Zymotic Rate	Deaths under 1 Year.	Deaths under 1 Year to 1,000 Births.
Caldbeck	4180	101	70	16·7	24·1	0·2	11	108
Wigton	5126	125	93	18·1	24·3	0·19	10	80
Aspatria...	3830	111	72	18·7	28·9	1·5	14	126
Total.	13136	337	235	17·8	25·6	0 6	35	104

TABLE 2.

VITAL STATISTICS IN RATES PER 1,000 DURING LAST 7 YEARS.

District.	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895
Caldbeck	11·9	13·09	17·2	16·5	14·5	12·9	16·8
Wigton	12·08	16·3	12·6	15·6	12·8	11·6	18·1
Aspatria	15·3	17·9	19·4	17·04	14·09	13·08	18·7
Totals.	13·4	15·8	16·6	16·4	13·7	12·2	17·8

TABLE 3.

DEATHS DURING LAST SEVEN YEARS.

District.	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895
Caldbeck	52	57	72	69	61	52	70
Wigton	57	77	65	80	66	59	93
Aspatria	99	111	129	113	54	50	72
Totals.	208	245	266	262	181	161	235

TABLE 4.

ZYMOTIC DEATH RATE DURING THE LAST SEVEN YEARS.

District.	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895
Caldbeck	0·22	*Nil.*	1·19	0·4	0·23	0·2	0·2
Wigton	0·21	0·4	0·9	0·5	0 39	0·5	0·19
Aspatria	1·7	0·4	1·3	1·2	0·52	1·3	1·5
Totals.	·8	·3	1·19	0·8	0·39	0·68	0·6

37
15

TABLE 5.

DEATHS UNDER 1 YEAR TO 1,000 BIRTHS, DURING LAST SEVEN YEARS.

District.	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895
Caldbeck	130	100	117	109	72	64	108
Wigton	111	55	103	57	52	128	80
Aspatria	106	113	114	130	85	104	126
Totals	116	89	112	99	70	99	104

In 1893 Aspatria became an Urban District.

TABLE 6.

TABLE OF DEATHS DURING THE YEAR 1895, IN THE WIGTON RURAL DISTRICT, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO DISEASES, AGES, AND LOCALITIES.

Names of Localities.	Mortality from all causes, at subjoined ages.								Mortality from subjoined causes, distinguishing Deaths of Children under 5 years of age.											
	At all ages	Under 1 year	1 and under 5	5 and under 15	15 and under 25	25 and under 65	65 and upwards		Scarlatina	Membranous Croup	Enteric or Typhoid.	Puerperal Fever	Measles	Rheumatic Fever	Phthisis	Br'chitis, Pneumonia, Pleurisy	Heart Disease	Injuries	All other Diseases	Total
Aspatria ...	72	14	12	2	6	18	20	Under 5	...	1	...	...	5	...	3	2	...	...	14	25
								5 upwards	...	...	1	...	...	...	3	9	9	4	21	47
Wigton ...	93	10	3	6	4	32	38	Under 5	...	...	..	...	...	...	1	3	...	..	9	13
								5 upwards	1	...	...	...	...	...	5	15	10	8	41	80
Caldbeck ...	70	11	5	5	1	23	25	Under 5	...	...	...	...	...	...	..	3	..	..	13	16
								5 upwards	1	...	...	1	...	1	5	5	13	2	26	54
Total.	235	35	20	13	11	73	83	Under 5	1	1	...	...	5	...	4	8	...	...	36	54
								5 upwards	1	...	1	1	...	1	13	29	32	14	88	181

TABLE 7.

NEW CASES OF INFECTIOUS SICKNESS COMING TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH, DURING THE YEAR 1895.

Districts.	Aged under 5 or over 5.	Scarlatina.	Enteric or Typhoid.	Puerperal. Fever.	Erysipelas.	Influenza.
Caldbeck	Under 5	5	...	...	...	...
	5 upwards.	7	1	1	...	6
Wig on	Under 5	14	...	...	...	...
	5 upwards.	30	1	...	9	4
Aspatria	Under 5	4	...	...	...	...
	5 upwards.	3	...	...	4	3
Totals	Under 5	23	...	...	...	...
	5 upwards	40	2	1	13	13

TABLE 8.

BIRTH STATISTICS DURING LAST 7 YEARS.

District.	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895
Caldbeck	126	100	111	110	111	109	101
Wigton	100	145	107	140	115	117	125
Aspatria	160	214	210	230	105	125	111
Totals	386	459	428	480	331	351	337